

Paramount Theatre
Sunrise Ave. and North County Road
Palm Beach
Palm Beach Co.
Florida

HABS No. FLA-230

HABS,
FLA,
50-PALM
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20243

PARAMOUNT THEATRE

Location: Southeast corner, Sunrise Avenue and North County Road, Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida.

Present Owner: Sunshine Plaza Ltd., Mr. and Mrs. Reid Moore.

Present Use: Unoccupied. Renovating and reconstruction are being done with a view to leasing as originally used.

Significance: Built as a movie theatre just before the advent of talking films, it is one of the last theatres built especially for silent movies. However, its architect, the Viennese Joseph Maria Urban, a noted theatre architect and stage designer, saw to it that the theatre was acoustically suited to the musical accompaniment of silent films, to which purpose he had installed a large pipe organ, as well as to the sound of live stage performances. These acoustics of the house would serve also the talking picture, of whose impending approach Urban was well aware. Entered on National Register 12/12/73.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1926.
2. Architect: Joseph Maria Urban (1872-1933) was born in Austria, where he studied at the Art Academy in Vienna before beginning his career in architecture, interior decoration, general art work, and stage production. Before first coming to America in 1911 he had achieved a distinguished career, noted for such architectural achievements as the alterations of Egypt's Khedive palace in 1894; the Tsar's Bridge over the Neva River in Leningrad in 1896; the first modern interior in the Austrian Museum; and much artistic work including illustrations of various books, and interior decoration. In 1900 he was noted for his decorative work at the Paris exposition. In 1904 he decorated the Austrian building at the St. Louis exposition in America. He came to the United States in 1911, and began work for the Boston Opera Company, the Century Opera Company, the Chicago Opera Company, Interstate Opera Company in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1917, the year in which he became a naturalized United States citizen, he began his many years of scenery design and set building for the Metropolitan Opera Company, as well as other New York theatres.

In 1925, Urban did the Club de Montmartre in Palm Beach, Florida; Camp House in Dallas, Texas, and began the Sunrise Building (Paramount Theatre Building) in Palm Beach. In 1926 he completed his work on the Paramount Theatre, and the following year was to complete the surprising Ziegfeld Theatre in New York with Thomas W. Lamb as an associate architect.

Urban continued to decorate several hotels and private homes, including Marjorie Merriweather Post's home at Mar-a-Lago (HABS No. FLA-195) in Palm Beach from 1923 to 1927. Here Urban collaborated with architect Marion Sims Wyeth, and was responsible for the interior design, and exterior ornamentation of the Post residence. He continued his long career of staging productions for the Metropolitan Opera Company throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and worked with equal skill on sets for Otello, Tristan and Isolde, and the Ziegfield Follies. In 1930 he also worked for Fox Productions on sets for movie films.

Urban designed the Paramount Theatre with the thought of having sound with the movies, although not the sound track which was to come. Throughout the beginning and development of the motion-picture film, music had always accompanied the action on the silent screen. In only two years after the Paramount Theatre in Palm Beach was finished, Urban wrote, "At a time when pictures were accompanied by music, hearing well was an important feature which, with the coming of the talking picture, now becomes an absolute and prime necessity." His building was not only designed with acoustics to suit the piano or organ-accompanied silent film, but to be satisfactory for live stage performances also.

3. Original and subsequent owners:

- a. According to notes from a chronological record of documents filed in the Abstract Record Books of the Circuit Clerk's Office in the Palm Beach County Court House, West Palm Beach, Florida, the following owners and leasees are revealed:

9/24/26	J. Leonard Replogle & wf. sold the property to the Sunrise Corporation for \$1.00.
11/10/28	Sunrise Corporation mortgaged the property to E. F. Hutton for \$100,000.
3/8/37	Satisfaction of \$100,000 from E. F. Hutton to Sunrise Corporation, Lots 15 and 16 and all of 14 except w. 15 ft.
11/1/37	Lease from E. F. Hutton to Sunrise Corporation, Lot 15 and 16 and all of 14 except w. 15 ft.
11/9/37	Assignment from Sunrise Corporation to Palm Beach Theatres, Inc., et al, Lots 14 and 15.
11/22/37	Five additional years added to a lease from Sunrise Corp. to West Palm Beach Theatres, Inc., for the Paramount Theatre on Lots 14 and 15, with use of courts and alleyways.

- 2/8/45 Five-year lease for \$6,000 from Sunrise Corporation to Frank Turgeon, Jr., of Stores No. 13, 14, 15, 21, and 22, in the Paramount Theatre Bldg., on Sunrise Ave., and Apt. Number 8, same bldg.
- 5/23/45 Five-year lease for \$3,000 from Sunrise Corporation to Frederick G. Seelman, Offices 1, 3, and 4 in Paramount Bldg.
- 1/14/46 Warranty Deed, for \$207,700 (no further data)
- b. According to notes from the Building Department, Town of Palm Beach, Florida, re: the Paramount Theatre (then numbered as 141 No. County Road), Palm Beach, Florida, construction repair was received on roof over shops and apartment and elsewhere as:
- 11/26/28 Permit No. 33028 to Watt & Sinclair, Inc., to construct-repair storm damage [for] Paramount Theatre--\$600.
- 11/20/31 Permit No. 10231, to Edward D. Boone, construction-alteration for Paramount Theatre--\$980.
- 8/6/38 Permit No. 3238, to [unstated] for alterations for Sunrise Corporation, Edw. F. Nickerson, Sec. Treas., --\$1,000.
- 8/17/45 Permit No. 11645 to construct-repair roof, Paramount Theatre--\$1,000.
- 11/8/46 Permit No. 21446 to Florida Theatre, Inc., to have constructed and alterations made for two apartments in the Sunrise Bldg., [architect unidentified]-\$1,000.
- 12/5/46 Permit No. 23246 to J. R. Wakeman to construct front line fence for Andres Restaurant by Bedford Shoumate (?)--\$125.
- 11/24/47 Permit No. 29447 to Florida Coastal Theatres, Inc., to have air-conditioning unit installed in the theatre--\$25,000.
- 7/16/48 Permit No. 19448 to Florida Theatres, Inc., for O. W. Milton to construction, alteration, and repairs [designed by] Architects Kemp, Bunche, & Jackson --\$12,000. [Large size plans.]
- 1/27/50 Permit No. 3050 to Carpenter's Roofing Co., to construct-repair [roof] for Florida Theatres, Inc.,-\$340.
- 10/26/50 Permit No. 40250 to Carpenter's Roofing Co., to construct-repair [roof] for Florida State Theatres, Inc., --\$1,200.

- 12/30/52 Permit No. 48052 to Florida State Theatre, Inc., to repair roof--\$1,000.
- 4/2/54 Permit No. 9254 to Coastal Properties Corp., to construct-repair fire damage in Myron Widett office--\$400.
- 10/15/58 Permit No. 50858 to Hawthorne Roofing to re-roof sloping areas, Paramount Theatre Bldg.,--\$850.
- 9/1/61 Permit No. 53961 to Walden Sandblasting, Inc., [at] Paramount Building--\$1,000.
- 3/22/63 Permit No. 11763 to Hawthorne Roofing Co., to construct-re-roof 4 decks each side of belfry [for] Paramount Theatre--\$720.
- 4/10/64 Permit No. 14064 to Hawthorne Roofing Co. to re-roof belfry [for] Paramount Theatre--[Mistype, appears to be \$400.]
- 2/7/66 Permit No. 7166 to Hawthorne Roofing Co., to re-roof flat area for Florida State Theatres, Paramount Building--\$590.
- 10/25/66 Permit No. 65266 to Hawthorne Roofing, Heating & Air Conditioning Co., to re-roof triangular deck, Paramount Theatre--\$300.

In 1971 the Paramount property was purchased by Sunshine Plaza Ltd.

- 4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Not identified except as certain names appear for contract repairs and alterations above.
- 5. Original plan and construction: The Paramount was completed and opened in November 1926, however the official grand opening was held at a later date, January 9, 1927. One of the earlier dated plans of May 20, 1926, is entitled "The Sunrise Building." On a subsequent plan ("Renting Plan For . . . ") the word "Sunrise" has been erased, and "Paramount" put in its place. The later plan is dated June 8, 1926. Therefore it seems that the original idea was to call the building "The Sunrise Building" and yet this was changed before the first opening in November of that year.

A plat map, surveyed by George S. Brockway, Registered Engineer & Surveyor, West Palm Beach, Florida, and recorded in Plat Book 7, page 63, from the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court in and for Palm Beach County, Florida, shows the general plan of the Paramount Theatre and the Paramount Theatre Building. [Date, unclear, appears to be 1927.]

The building remains almost entirely in its original condition and form. When it opened in November 1926, there were 1080 orchestra seats and 156 box seats. [The early drawings show 26 boxes containing three ranks of seating. Photographs from 1972 show evidence that every other barrier between boxes has been removed, but the original arrangement would have had a total of 6 seats in each box, or 156 seats. Present arrangements show 12 seats to a box because of the barrier removal.] The rest of the building was designed with 20 stores opening to the street, and 13 spaces for offices. Overall the original design was symmetrical except for some rooms along the aides of the auditorium.

6. Alterations and additions: The arrangements of awnings has gone through some changes. In the original design of the 1926-29 drawings, and in the photographs, there are no awnings indicated. In 1939 there were awnings at some of the windows, the last being in the interior courtyard area.

The main entrance roof had tiles until recently. They are shown in the original drawings and in the 1950s photograph.

Over the main entrance the lower ceiling was extended downward probably in conjunction with the addition of the large sidewalk sign, awning, and ticket-booth additions, which took place sometime after 1950. The original ticket office took up the same space as the candy counter at the present time.

The entrance to the theatre consisted of three separate doors until the 1950s. Above these was a short overhang of wood and roofing tile. Over this were windows into the upper lobby and projection room. The windows are basically intact in the projection room, but are walled in at the upper lobby.

In the original pre-1929 photo the terraces are completely covered with spaced wood-slat decking.

Since the 1939 photograph the building was and is partially covered with vines, although less extensively today.

Much of the office space has been used for apartments since 1929, and some minor adjustments have been made in some of the stores on the ground floor.

The original plans show a pipe organ built into the auditorium with two sets of pipes, one to either side of the stage. The keyboard has since been removed, and presumably the reat also.

The original seating has been removed from the auditorium, including the box seats. [See above.]

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The principal note of historic importance is that the architect and designer of the Paramount Theatre was Joseph Maria Urban. Cleveland Amory makes the statement in The Last Resorts that the Paramount was designed on a tablecloth by Joseph Urban as an underwater scene. It is possible to see in the treatment of the auditorium walls of the Palm Beach Paramount Theatre an inspiration later expanded in the interior of the Ziegfield Theatre in New York in 1927, the climax of his career, and for which he was associate architect with Thomas W. Lamb, one of the great American theatre architects.

The owner of the Paramount Theatre, probably a member of the Sunrise Corporation, was Stanley C. Marrick, who also owned the other theatres in Palm Beach—the Beaux Arts (1916), the Garden (1923); and the Kettler Theatre in West Palm Beach. Of all these theatres, the Paramount was the most elaborate. The box places sold for \$1,000 per season when the theatre opened for the first season. The semi-circle of the boxes gained the name of the Diamond Horseshoe for this small theatre in Palm Beach, for the same reason it had come into use with the first-tier boxes in the Metropolitan Opera House, because of the great amount of jewels displayed there by the women of Palm Beach Society. (who were quite likely some of the same ones who attended the opera). So many jewels were worn in the Boxes at the Paramount that local history has it that the presence of bodyguards was required by the ladies.

After the first opening in November, a second or official Grand Opening for the Paramount Theatre took place on January 9, 1927, with the premier of "Beau Geste" starring Ronald Colman. Only a few movie titles are available to indicate the nature of the programming at the Paramount Theatre as it continued, but the following programs, with their related stars of stage and screen offer some evidence of the quality:

A film featuring Will Rogers was shown at the Paramount's first Benefit program to raise money for the Salvation Army Headquarters on Sunday, March 18, 1928.

First-run movies shown at the Paramount were Emil Jannings in Faust; Clara Bow in It; Wallace Beery in Casey at the Bat; Ramon Navarro and Francis X. Bushman in Ben Hur; Greta Garbo and John Gilbert in Love.

Another Child Benefit program sponsored by the Kiwanis Club in 1928 included the following stars: Louise Groody, Dorothy Dalton, George Gershwin, Al Jolson, Eric Zardo, Arthur "Bugsie" Baer and others.

Another Benefit on February 20, 1929, showed stars Billie Burke (Mrs. Florenz Ziegfield), and others.

The members of the Managers and Producers Committee for both of the Benefits mentioned above were taken from the first ranks of theatre managers and producers in the country, and included playwright and librettist Oscar Hammerstein (1895-1960), producer Arthur Melancthon Hopkins (1878-1950), theatre manager and producer Sam H. Harris (1872-1941), and John Emerson (1874-1956), actor, author, stage director, and husband and collaborator of world-famous screen writer Anita Loos.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Original architectural drawings may be found in the Historical Society of Palm Beach County, in the Flagler Museum building.
2. Old views: A series of old photographs is in the possession of Mrs. Reid Moore, owner of the Paramount Theatre building.
3. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Abstract Record Books, Circuit Clerk's Office, Palm Beach County Courthouse, West Palm Beach, Florida. 1926-48, Plat Book 7, p. 63.

Building Permits, Building Department, Town of Palm Beach, Florida, 1928-1966.

List of works of Joseph Urban, in possession of Mrs. Reid Moore, owner of the Paramount Theatre building.

Information concerning building under construction from Mrs. Maxine Banash of the Historical Society of Palm Beach County, Flagler Museum.

Telephone interview with Walter Zvonchenko, Performing Arts Librarian, Kennedy Center and the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Telephone interview with Mrs. John Pelz, Archivist, Metropolitan Opera Company.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Amory, Cleveland. The Last Resorts. New York: Harper, 1952.

Fulton, A. R. Motion Pictures: The Development of an Art from Silent Films to the Age of Television. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960.

Urban, Joseph, Theatre Arts Inc. Theatres. New York: Radfield-Downey-Odello, Inc., 1929. [Old views.]

Palm Beach Life, Feb. 5, 1929, p. 18.

[NOTE: By 1980 the theatre has gone through still more owners, and is now about to shift ownership from the First Southern Holdings Co. to the Town of Palm Beach, the theatre to be leased as theatre, other space to be used as offices.]

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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The architectural character of this building derives from the scheme which incorporates stores and apartments with a motion-picture theatre and a typical Florida patio or courtyard. It is a fine adaptation of several income-producing functions within the same building complex to the climatic conditions which make it feasible. It is superior to modern shopping centers in the scale and relationship of the open spaces to the stores and to the mass of the theatre auditorium. Bridges across the courtyard at the second-story level add to the three-dimensional character and scale of courtyard.
2. Condition of fabric: After several years of vacancy the Paramount Theatre has suffered a natural deterioration. However, the present owner, Sunshine Plaza Ltd., who purchased the property in 1971, has begun a serious program of restoration and adaptation which promises the successful rehabilitation of this structure.

B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions, layout and shape: This theatre is part of a complex which occupies practically the entire corner site, 166.33 feet on North County Road and 179.42 feet on Sunrise Avenue, the southeast corner of the intersection. It is placed diagonally on the site, its entrance facing due northwest. It has a 6' walk along the east property line and a 3' alley on the south. The fan shape of the courtyard and the theatre auditorium behind it is followed at the arc of the front perimeter by irregular-shaped stores which are symmetrically disposed between the courtyard and the public sidewalk. Behind the store on the east wall is a storage room, and behind the store on the south wall is a meter room.

2. Foundations: Unknown.
3. Wall construction, finish, and color: Walls are hollow structural tile which have been stuccoed and painted white.
4. Structural system, framing: The roof of the auditorium of the theatre, visible at the level of the projection booth, is framed by steel trusses which radiate from the stage.
5. Breezeways, terraces, courtyard, bridges: At the intersection of South County Road and Sunrise Avenue the apron of the front corner of the plot is surfaced with random-shaped cast-stone pavers.

Slightly withdrawn from the street corner, yet in axis with it and approached by a canopied walk, is the main entrance facade, with a broad shallow gable rising slightly higher than the flanking two-story sections of stores and offices. This two-and-a-half story entrance facade takes the form of a double-deck breezeway, with lintel openings below and pointed-arch openings above.

Contoured beneath the shallow gable roof, but over the arches of both openings of the breezeway's second level, are identical theatre signs, showing PARAMOUNT, in script, inset with light bulbs. The forward arched opening and theatre sign look out toward the northwest and the street intersection, and the rear or southeast opening and sign look back over the inner courtyard, and directly into the second level of the domed tower marking the entrance to the theatre itself at ground level below.

The ceiling of the breezeway, reflecting the pitch of the shallow gabled roof, has exposed beams and joists in pecky cypress with the same decking as that on its terrace floor. It is here finished in rubbed antique blue. Metal tie rods terminated in decorative straps appear on the face of the high wall.

The deck of the terrace which constitutes the floor of the second-level breezeway, is of duckboarding over the built-up tar and gravel of the once-exposed roofing of the first-floor breezeway below. At the second level the breezeway is flanked by offices on the southwest and northeast whose floors are slightly lower than the deck of the upper breezeway. This difference in levels at the second floor is compensated for by lateral sets of three steps recessed into the upper breezeway terrace floor, leading slightly down to gain entrance to the flanking suites of offices which rise only two-thirds of the height of the second-floor breezeway.

The arched openings of the upper breezeway are shielded at their base by a small spool-and-reel balustrade, pitched from both ends toward a central apex formed by a square wood post, carved at the top into fish and wave designs with a ball finial. The stuccoed

and pointed arches are supported by free-standing smooth round columns with pelican and snake designs in high relief on the capitals. These columns rest on smooth stuccoed pedestals in line with the foot of the balustrade.

Outside the arched openings, sunk on the face of the wall below the base of openings, there is attached a planter, lined with copper and covered with vee-joint siding, and extending the full width of the arched openings. The planter serves to fix the inner end of the entrance canopy.

The open terraces above the outer one-story offices are enclosed by wood balustrades of the same spool-and-reel pattern as that at the upper breezeway openings. Removeable concrete planters occur at regular intervals between the sections of the balustrade. The built-up flat deck is surfaced with grabel on which are deckboards finished in green. There is a continuous copper drip and gutter on each edge.

Four open bridges cross the narrow courtyard at the second-story level—one at each end is free from the walls and next to it a right-angle stairs leads down to the courtyard. These bridges and stairs also serve as balcony fire escapes for the theatre, and have their decks made of copper.

Two intermediate bridges connect the terraces with the apartments which are in the outer corners of the auditorium wall. The decks of these intermediate bridges are of built-up roofing with gravel surface. Balustrades on these bridges are pitched upward toward the center (as in the second-story balustrades before the arched openings of the upper breezeway) and have the same square center post decorated with wave, fish, and ball design. The bridges are supported by bracketed columns with Greeek-mask capitals. The lower edges of the supporting beams of the bridge are slightly cut out to increase headroom in the passage below, and to suggest an archway echoing the double pitch of the bridge balustrade above. The under side of the bridge is surfaced with the plank-on-plank design used throughout the building on nearly all exposed wood surfaces.

6. Chimneys: A chimney shown in the southwest corner of the front office section in an early photograph has been removed.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Original doors are of wood, with fifteen lights. Several have been replaced with single-light commercial doors. Original rectangular wood rejas are located in front of the transoms in the entrance passage and on some of the street-front doors.

Circular rejas are used in the transoms of store doors in the lateral face of the entrance facade, and facing the street intersection. All openings with simple wood frames are set in plastered reveals. The entrance doorway to the auditorium, 10'-0" x 7'-0", contains four plate-glass doors which are not original. An early photograph shows three glass doors. Transoms above are presently filled with wood panels, enclosed by blind arches and hood molding. Reveals are plastered. Fire exit doors to the courtyard are double with fixed louvers.

Doors from the terrace to the offices on the second floor are similar to those below. Doors from the end bridges to the forward apartments along the outer auditorium walls are rectangular, 3'-0" x 8'-0", with the glazed opening shaped into a pointed arch with intersecting wood tracery. The entire panel consists of 15 lights. The rectangular door frame is cut to receive a screened door made into a true pointed arch. The fire doors leading to this bridge are 3'-0" x 7'-0", now glazed with fifteen lights. They may be original. Similar doors leading to the apartments occur at the foot of the intermediate bridges.

- b. Windows: Shop windows are fixed plate glass, one-light, 65" x 80", with an operating hinged pointed-arch transom with four lights. Wood frames are set in stuccoed reveals without trim.

In the office suites on the second floor, windows are single-hung, 35" x 69", six-over-six lights. The fixed top sash has a glazed arch set into the wood frame. The window screens are also arched within a rectangular frame.

Windows in the apartment wings on the second floor are grouped with doors to form an arcaded effect of pointed arches with a continuous hood molding beginning at the sills. These single-hung windows are 36' x 66" with intersecting wood tracery in the fixed pointed arches set in rectangular frames. Windows in the apartments around the auditorium are single-hung, 35" x 69", six-over-six lights with fixed top sash, set in the plastered reveal.

The bi-fold shutters at these windows have fixed louvers. Scrolled shutter keepers are attached to the wall. Under a domed projection in the auditorium wall are three arched openings with a wood balustrade across the bottom. The two end arches are now filled in with wood. The center bay is glazed with 18 lights.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The side apartments have knee-tiled hipped roofs. Shed roofs over the arc of the offices flanking the theatre entrance at the rear of the courtyard are also tiled. The two-story office wings have built-up flat roofs concealed by a low

parapet. The main auditorium roof is also built up. Early photographs show that the gabled roof over the entrance breezeway was once covered with knee tiles also. It is now covered with roll roofing. The pitched apron at the front of the auditorium roof is also covered with roll roofing which is the same material shown in the early photograph.

- b. Cornice, eaves: Overhanging eaves on the main entrance have decoratively carved exposed rafters. Similar rafters are exposed under the shed roof. A plastered cyma recta cornice is located at the parapet over the front offices.
- c. Dome: There is a copper-sheathed dome over the main entrance lobby and stair hall at the center rear of the courtyard. The copper surface is decorated with embossed intersecting lancet arches closely spaced. It should be noted that this dome does not express any interior space, and is not visible from the exterior, except at a distance, but it does serve to mark on the skyline the exact entrance to the Paramount Theatre.

C. Description of the Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: The two pages of architectural drawings of the plans for the first and second floor of the Paramount Theatre at Sunrise Avenue and North County Road were traced from reduced prints of original 1/8" scale revised drawings by Joseph Urban's office, dated June 8, 1926. Drawings represent essentially as-built conditions, and were done by Richard T. High, Student Architect, Georgia Institute of Technology.

Within the square plot, the drawings show the stage and auditorium of the theatre forming a basic fan shape to which adjoining stores, offices, and a pair of flanking second-floor apartments are related. On the rear arc of an inner open courtyard lies the rear wall of the theatre auditorium, and on the forward arc of the same space lie more stores and stairs. These are arranged to accommodate to the narrowing angle of the corner of the plot at the street intersection. In the drawings, the stage and street entrance form diagonally opposite points of the square plot, and to the left and right corners are filled with stores on the second floor, and to the extreme left and right, on the second floor, there are apartments.

2. First floor:

- a. Lobby: This space directly beneath the domed tower has been renovated by a recent owner. The entrance doors have definitely been changed from three to four. On axis to the entrance is the "modernized" concessions stand, on each side of which are a pair of wood doors covered with leatherette panels. The trim around these openings is a 7" half-round molding. Trim around the concession stand is a 13" half-round. Floors are carpeted.

The north and south walls are mirrored. The east and west walls and the wall behind the concession stand, once papered, are painted.

- b. Stairway: The carpeted stairway begins on the right of the concession stand, with six risers up to a quarter-circle landing, whence left, up six risers to a similar landing, and then left up five risers to the second floor. A modern circular handrail is attached to the walls. A wood balustrade surrounds the stair well. Spool-and-reel balusters are similar to those on exterior terraces and stairs. The walls are 6" plank battens on 6" planks. This plank-on-plank motif is typical throughout the theatre. A large planter also faced with battens is set on the inner face of the stair well.
- c. Auditorium (Orchestra: The fan-shaped auditorium measures 163' approximately, at the perimeter on a quadrant or arc formed by the last row of seats. The fixed theatre seating flanking the six radiating aisles is not original. The depressed orchestra pit is two risers below the auditorium floor and is enclosed by the typical balustrade. (It is probable that this balustrade was the original fascia of the stage apron before it was removed.) Plans indicate that a small organ pit was in front of the apron.

The sloping concrete floors are carpeted in the aisles only. The splayed sidewalls of the theatre have a wainscot in the typical plank battens, stepped with the slope of the floor. Above this, on each side wall, a painted canvas mural in dark tones depicts a fanciful underwater scene. The cross-aisle at the rear is separated from the seating by a wrought-iron screen painted white, and curtained on the auditorium side. The screen or grille is set between smooth round green-painted wood columns, 5'-5" on center, with double Greek theatre masks on each face of the capitals, rubbed with blue and gilt. The rear of the aisle is papered, and also has cast plaster sconces. The soffit of the balcony is the ceiling of the aisle. It is finished in planked battens. The suspended folded plate ceiling contains exposed beams at both top and bottom edges of the fold. The plates are typical battens, perpendicular to the beams. A large wood grilled panel in the ceiling contains concealed lighting. Horizontal ventilating louvers are high on the side walls.

Double exit doors on each wall interrupt the murals. They have two-paneled wood frames with turned wood spindle insets, behind which are curtains. These lead to fire doors beyond. Two other doors leading to storage and to the back-stage area are concealed within the canvas mural.

The auditorium is illuminated by four chandeliers suspended from the ceiling. In seven tiers of rings with exposed candle lamps, the rings diminish in size from center to top and bottom. The taper effect suggests a delicate, illuminated fish trap.

The curve of the balcony soffit is fitted with about four dozen smaller metal lamps with dark "parchment" shades.

- d. Proscenium and stage: The stage of the Paramount Theatre is limited to the small amount of space left between the back of the orchestra pit and the southeast corner of the building plot. Description is here confined to the auditorium side of the stage, where velvet curtains and a wide movie screen separate the back-stage area from the auditorium.

The flanking corners of the proscenium face are composed of smooth, shallow concave and convex double-curve wall surfaces rising vertically from stage to ceiling but visually continuing the horizontal murals of the side walls across and onto the flat wall surface above the stage. Into this rises the proscenium opening in the shape of a wide, shallow bell arch, narrow at the top and 34'-0" wide at its base. The arch is composed of cyma reversa curves edged with corresponding molding, and calls to mind the lines of the curvilinear arch of a Spanish-Revival or Mission-Style pediment. At the base of the bell arch the curvilinear molding becomes horizontal, marking the shoulders of the proscenium, and then turns downward at right angles toward the floor of the very narrow stage apron, which rests upon a vertical raised-plank fascia.

- e. Shops and stores: The open courtyard which follows the sweeping curve of the rear of the auditorium is separated from the streets by shops of various sizes, shapes, and levels. Although originally planned symmetrically around the central axis of the auditorium, interiors have undergone change and alteration.

3. Second floor:

- a. Stair lounge: At the top of the stairs, which circles within the central tower, and at the second-story level, behind the balcony, there is a small lounge in an alcove.
- b. Balcony seating: Corresponding to loge seats in a larger theatre, the so-called "Diamond Horseshoe" of private boxes rises just above the rear of the orchestra seating. Actually a shallow balcony, it is fronted in a typical wood ball-and-block balustrade with a typical wood raised-panel parapet. Like the rear of the orchestra seating, this balcony is backed by arcaded openings, supported by the same types of columns as on the first-floor level. Each arched opening at the back defines the three-level seating arrangement of the private box, and each box is separated from its adjacent boxes by the typical balustrade stepped along with the levels of the carpeted floor. [Subsequent alterations show the box divisions occurring at every other column. See p. 5.] In each arch is suspended a wrought-iron lantern.

Directly above the arches the rear wall continues--with plaster insets of circular rejas in typical spool design on the right and left ends, and projectionist ports in the center section--to the folded plate ceiling. The projection booth is reached by a vertical wood ladder enclosed in a very small shaft connected to the rear balcony aisle by a two-paneled door. The attic above the suspended plate ceiling is reached through openings in the projection booth.

5. Second-floor apartments and offices: The June 8, 1926, revision of the Joseph Urban drawings indicate that apartments were planned by Urban at the two extremities of the open courtyard, with wood stairs providing access to them, as well as serving the fire stairs for the balcony of the theatre. Other second-floor areas were planned as offices. This included a clustered suite of three offices with enclosed stairs on each side of the entrance breezeway, which remain as offices. Other offices ringed the rear wall of the balcony. Exterior access to the offices was by means of intermediate wood bridges over the open courtyard. These offices have since been converted into east central and south central apartments.

- a. Outer apartments: The original extreme left and right outer apartments were planned to be similar to each other. The one on the south end of the courtyard is composed of two small rooms, bath, and a kitchenette installed in a former closet. The two small rooms, separated only by a plywood partition appear to have been converted from a single larger room. An end room with pointed-arch windows has a hardwood floor, while the adjacent room has asphalt tile flooring.

The apartment at the east end of the courtyard is similar except that the interior partition is plaster, and the interior room is furnished as a kitchen.

- b. East central apartment: This apartment contains a living room opening to the bridge over the courtyard. It is between the bedroom on the west, and the dining room on the east, beyond which are a small kitchen, a bath, and a rear exit to the fire exit corridor for the theatre balcony. From this corridor, double fire doors lead to the wood stairs at the end of the courtyard. There are traces of two earlier doors in the fire-exit corridor.

The floors of the living room are varnished pine. Walls are typical planked battens with an antiqued finish. Cornice and baseboard are simple. All doors have the same finish as the walls. The ceiling is painted plaster. There is a false fireplace on the west wall. It is concrete with a rubbed paint finish, composed of two pilasters decorated with festooned panels supporting a decorative bracketed entablature. The entablature contains a heraldic shield centered between griffins, cherubs, and wreaths.

The bedroom in the east central apartment has hardwood floors with plastered walls and ceiling. The west wall is a closet wall with sliding louvered doors. The four-lamp fixture is gold-plated.

There is a dining room, with finishes similar to the other rooms, and a kitchen and bath with relatively modern fixtures.

- c. South central apartment: This apartment was occupied and not accessible.

D. Site and surroundings:

General setting and orientation: The building is situated on the south-east corner of the intersection of Sunrise Avenue and North County Road, diagonally across from St. Edwards Catholic Church. It is several blocks north of the property of The Breakers Hotel, and one block east of the Biltmore Hotel in a low density business area. The triangular front apron of the plot, bounded by two street intersections, is paved with colored cast-concrete pavers, edged by planting beds at the building. There is one off-side planter to the northeast of the entrance canopy, from which rises a commercial street sign, in lieu of a marquee, with illuminated announcement board and theatre sign, PARAMOUNT, in letters slightly smaller than those at the top of the central breezeway at the roofline.

Prepared by Richard C. Crisson	and	Prof. Woodrow W. Wilkins, AIA
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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Florida project to survey the historic architecture of Palm Beach and to emphasize written historical and architectural data was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Historical Society of Palm Beach County and the Florida Board of Archives and History in the summer of 1971. Under the direction of James C. Massey, then Chief of HABS, the project was carried out in the Historic American Buildings Survey field office in the Flagler Museum, Whitehall Way, Palm Beach, with Professor Woodrow W. Wilkins, AIA (University of Miami) Project Supervisor; Richard C. Crisson, Architect (University of Florida); Richard T. High, Student Architect (Georgia Institute of Technology); and Bryan Paul Bowman, Student Historian (University of Florida). Under the general direction of John Poppeliers, HABS Chief from March 1972, additional documentation was prepared and archival photographs for the project were taken in April 1972 by Jack E. Boucher, HABS photographer. Editing and final preparation of the documentation was carried out in 1980 in the HABS Washington office by Lucy Pope Wheeler of the HABS professional staff.

ADDENDUM TO:
PARAMOUNT THEATRE
Sunrise Avenue and North County Road
Palm Beach
Palm Beach County
Florida

HABS No. FL-230

HABS
FLA,
50-PALM,
5-

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